

CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE PROSECUTION
OF PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR SERIOUS VIOLATIONS
OF INTERNATIONAL LAW COMMITTED IN THE TERRITORY
OF THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA SINCE 1991

WITNESS STATEMENT

WITNESS INFORMATION:

Last Name: ANTIC
First Name: Saša
Father's Name: Dragomir
Date of Birth: 3 July 1970
Ethnic Origin: Serb
Date(s) of Interview: 5 January 2008
Interviewers: Mihajlo BAKRAČ
Language Used in Interview: Serbian

Signed by witness: _____

WITNESS STATEMENT

1. I was born on 3 July 1970 in Gnjilane, Republic of Serbia. I completed elementary school in the village of Ranilug in 1985. After completing elementary school, I enrolled in the army secondary school in Belgrade, which I finished in 1989. From 1989 to 1993, I attended the Land Forces Military Academy in Belgrade and Kruševac, specialisation infantry. After completing the Land Forces Military Academy I was assigned to a post in the Priština garrison.
2. I am currently in disability retirement. I retired in 2002 because of the consequences of serious wounds sustained in 1999 in the KiM /Kosovo and Metohija/. I retired with the rank of Captain 1st Class.
3. I performed the following manning table duties: military police platoon commander, anti-terrorist platoon commander and military police company commander.
4. In 1998 and 1999, when I had the rank of Captain, I performed the duty of company commander in the 52nd Military Police Battalion (bVP), which was stationed in the Priština garrison.
5. The peacetime manning table of the 52nd bVP consisted of the battalion command, a military police services platoon, an antiterrorist platoon, one military police company, one special purposes military police company, a traffic military police company, a support platoon and a logistics platoon. The wartime manning table differs from the peacetime table because in addition to the above-mentioned units, it has another military police company, so the wartime manning table has a first and a second military police company. The peacetime formation of the 52nd bVP numbers about 400 men, while the wartime formation, which is increased by one company, numbers about 500 men. I would add that the additional personnel in the wartime manning table are also recorded in mobilisation documents and in the event of a state of war, it is known precisely who is to be called up and how. The selection of soldiers for the bVP is carried out according to special criteria prescribed by the GŠ VJ (General Staff of the Yugoslav Army) from among first-class soldiers who must satisfy special psychological and physical criteria.
6. General unit-specific tasks of the 52nd bVP were the following: securing and protecting the Priština Corps /PrK/ command, securing military property, securing military traffic and transportation, maintaining military order and discipline, detecting crimes and perpetrators within the jurisdiction of military courts that are prosecuted *ex officio*, combat against terrorist, sabotage and other enemy groups, and securing areas, zones, axes and military features of special significance. Concrete tasks of the special purposes military police company, which I commanded, were the following: securing and protecting the PrK command, securing military property, combat against terrorist, sabotage and other enemy forces, and securing areas, zones, axes and military features of special significance.

7. The 52nd bVP was an independent unit in the PrK, directly subordinated to the Corps command. The commander of the 52nd bVP was Major Stevo KOPANJA. The Chief of the PrK security organ, Colonel Momir STOJANOVIĆ, did not have command over the 52nd bVP, but only and solely authorisations to propose the use of this unit to the Corps command. Therefore, the military police battalion was subordinated to the Corps command, while the PrK security organ controlled the unit with regard to professional matters, but it only proposed the use of this unit in accordance with VJ /Yugoslav Army/ rules of service and rules and instructions on the application of the rules of service of the military police.

8. I performed the duty of commander of the special purposes military police company from August 1997 until I was wounded, or more precisely, until 5 June 1999.

[REDACTED]

In fact, part of the 52nd bVP was deployed to the area of Radonjičko jezero in late April 1998 and we remained there until September that same year. Throughout this time, we performed our duties and our task was to secure the dam and the hydro-system from which all of Metohija received water supplies. The terrorists tried to blow up the dam and cause an ecological catastrophe. From the moment when we were assigned there in April 1998 until our departure from that area, we were stationed, in addition to the dam, on the slopes of the Vogelj hill, in tents and in the open air.

9. When we were taking over this position, fire was opened on us from the Vogelj hill by terrorists. When we took up positions on the hill, we found parts of military equipment, weapons and ammunition, as well as prepared fortifications, which the terrorists had been preparing for a long time already. After the return of the battalion to Priština in September 1998, I stayed with my company in the Đakovica garrison, in the barracks, with the task of securing the IKM /forward command post/ of the PrK command, both when it was mobile and stationary, because they had almost daily tasks visiting units protecting the state border in the depth and on the border line. At the end of 1998, my company was returned from the Đakovica garrison to the Priština garrison, where the rest of the 52nd bVP was located in the *Kosovski junaci* barracks. Until the declaration of a state of war on 24 March 1999, my battalion remained in the barracks and performed routine peacetime tasks.

10. At the beginning of the war, my battalion was deployed in several locations in order to provide security for elements of command posts of the PrK command and to provide security for its own deployment area, as well as to secure strategic war reserves. The main forces were deployed at the foot of Mt. Grmija, and parts of the unit were in the general area of the village of Gračanica, the Kišnica mine, etc. Lower-ranking battalion units were deployed in a wide area, and units were stationed primarily in fortified features (trenches, covers, shelters), which the unit made by itself. Small parts of the unit were occasionally stationed in abandoned socially-owned property, and these were mostly non-combat parts, such as the logistics platoon, the services platoon, etc. The unit did not use privately-owned civilian features, or rather houses, for accommodation, and the general order was to avoid

entering inhabited areas for reasons of our own security and the security of the civilian population.

11. The battalion command issued tasks and orders directly to company commanders and the commanders of basic units, in written or oral form, so squad commanders could not be present when orders and tasks were issued by the battalion commander. When they received a task, company commanders and platoon commander informed subordinate officers of the implementation of concrete tasks orally or by means of a command or an order.

12. I would like to add that even before the beginning of the war, a large number of orders from the PrK command, as well as the command of the 52nd bVP, were issued to all units with regard to general rules of conduct in combat and the treatment of the civilian population and their property, as well as captured terrorists. In addition, each Army member, including each member of my battalion, had in his pocket short instructions on conduct in combat operations and observance of rules of armed conflict and international humanitarian law.

13. The first attack on the military police company which was under my command took place already on 31 March 1999, when NATO aircraft dropped a load of cluster bombs on the position of the 1st platoon of my company in the general areas of the villages of Kišnica and Gračanica. Fortunately, the men were deployed in fortified shelters so there were no deaths. This part is located in the general area of Priština, which was exposed to daily attacks since the very beginning of NATO bombing, in which many civilian features, such as the main post office and some residential buildings, were also hit. This bombing triggered a large number of civilians to leave Priština and its general surroundings, taking routes to Gnjilan and further on toward Macedonia. In conversations which I had with a number of Albanian civilians on the road near Gračaničko jezero /Lake Gračanica/, I found out that they were evacuating their families on their initiative because they were afraid of the bombing, which was intense in those days and with no special selection of targets, as a consequence of which there were already a certain number of civilian casualties.

14. Some of these civilians of Albanian ethnicity told me openly in first-hand conversations that they had to move out under pressure from the KLA /Kosovo Liberation Army/ and that they would take refuge in Macedonia or Gnjilane and its surroundings. To my question: "Why there of all places?" they replied that they expected that they would not be under pressure there, because KLA terrorists were present in smaller numbers in that part of the KiM. I was in the position to see for myself that they really did take shelter in this part of the KiM, or rather in Gnjilane and its surroundings, when I went through this town, where the presence of a larger number of people than before the NATO bombing was evident.

15. Some time around 12 and 13 April 1999, a company was formed from the 52nd bVP (consisting of one platoon from my company, one platoon from the first VP /military police/ company and an antiterrorist platoon) and sent to the area of the Košare and Morina border posts to help units in that part of the border that were under strong attack by terrorist forces from Albania that had penetrated the border and entered into the depth of our territory. This was also the first direct combat operation

of a unit from the 52nd bVP since the beginning of the war and the first use of weapons. This company was resubordinated to the 125th mtbr /Motorised Brigade/ and engaged on the most difficult axes in order to strengthen the defence of the border from attacks by terrorists from Albania. I know from personal experience that fierce battles were waged with the terrorists, in hand-to-hand combat, with large losses on both sides. This land aggression, which started some time around 10 April 1999, also continued in May 1999 and lasted until the end of the war.

16. On 14 April 1999, on the Klina – Đakovica road, NATO aircraft bombed part of a unit from the 52nd bVP escorting buses transporting soldiers to reinforce units in Đakovica, and five soldiers and 2nd Lieutenant Boban MILIĆ, all members of my company, were killed on that occasion. Already on the next day, NATO attacked with cluster bombs a unit in the deployment area on Grmija, and two members of the traffic company of the 52nd bVP were wounded by cluster bombs.

17. I already explained that as the commander of the special purposes military police company, after the beginning of the war with part of my unit I often changed the deployment area in the general region of Priština, as follows: the areas of Gračanica, Kišnica, Grmija, etc., up until 21 April 1999. On that day, I was sent to the area of the Košare border post on orders from the battalion commander, Major Stevo KOPANJA, to replace Captain Jovica STANKOVIĆ at the post of commander of the company which, as I explained above in paragraph 15, had been formed and resubordinated to the 125th mtbr in order to stop the land invasion on the axis of the Košare and Morina border posts. The company's task was to stop, together with other forces of the 125th mtbr, further advances by terrorists from Albania and their linking-up with terrorists who were carrying out intense actions in the depth of the territory in the area of the Caragoj valley or the Reka valley, as it is also called.

18. [REDACTED]

19. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] As I explained above, one company had been formed, solely from among the personnel of the 52nd bVP, and it was sent to Košare and resubordinated to the 125th mtbr on 13 or 14 April 1999. This company was deployed at the Košare and Morina border posts and in the area of the village of Jasić and took part in heavy fighting in the defence of the state border. Throughout this time, it stayed in fortified features on the border itself and was not stationed in Albanian houses. Anyway, as far as I know, Junik was not destroyed, but very few civilians remained, because NATO bombed that area every day and it was also shelled by artillery from Albania.

20. [REDACTED]



21. It is true that at a time of land aggression and the penetration of the state border by terrorists, there was a danger that they would link up their forces with KLA forces, which numbered over 200 men in the Caragoj valley, or rather the Reka valley. The KLA carried out daily attacks from the Caragoj valley on the MUP /Ministry of the Interior/ and the VJ with deadly consequences, and they posed a serious danger to forces on the first line of defence of the state border. There was a danger that they would attack from behind and break the defence by cutting vital routes in that part of the territory.

22. After several days of fighting on the state border, I received the task to prevent the flow of terrorists toward the border by carrying out a manoeuvre of forces, or rather of part of my company, on 27 and 28 April 1999, because MUP forces were supposed to search the terrain in the Caragoj valley, or rather in Reka. My company's task was to move along the Dobroš village – Korenica village road and thus prevent the flow of terrorists. I was informed that units located between the Đakovica – Junik road and the border with the Republic of Albania would turn part of their forces toward the Caragoj valley and block terrorist raids on unit formations.

23. I used two platoons from my company for this task and we numbered 40 to 50 men in total. The task started on the morning of 27 April 1999 and my unit went along the Dobroš village – Ramoc village axis. To the left of my formation was part of the 63rd Parachute Brigade with approximately the same number of men as my unit. On the right side, as my right-hand neighbour, were PJP /Special Police Unit/ companies from Đakovica and Prizren. On the first day of the action, I did not establish visual or any other contact with my right-hand neighbour. At the beginning, I had visual contact with part of the 63rd Parachute Brigade, and later only radio contact. In the course of the day, my unit did not carry out any actions, while combat action could be heard from the axis of advance of MUP units, but I was not able to determine the reason for the action because of a lack of communication.

24. In the course of the first day, we came across an Albanian in civilian clothes who was hiding in the woods, and who was not from that area. Since he was hiding and was not from that territory, my duty was to bring that person with me and defer him to the competence of the MUP. Some time toward the evening of that first day, we arrived at about a hundred meters north of the village of Ramoc, where I established contact with the inhabitants of the village and informed them of the unit's intention, because it was already getting dark, to set up camp and spend the night at the edge of the village.

25. Village representatives told me that the presence of the army near the village could attract NATO bombing and that they wanted to go to Đakovica temporarily for that reason until we moved away in that area. I could not prevent them, but I proposed that the heads of three groups of houses located in that hamlet remain in their houses and be present in order to see that the army would not enter their houses. They accepted this, while their families left in the direction of Đakovica.

26. During the night, some time between 2130 and 22 hours, my unit was attacked by the KLA. During the fighting, one soldier, Private 1st Class Boban TOŠIĆ, was killed. The terrorists used hand-held launchers in the exchange of fire, setting a haystack on fire, which spread to a nearby auxiliary building (a barn) and from it to part of a house. At dawn, we found a dead terrorist wearing a camouflage uniform and carrying personal weapons, hand grenades and a hand-held rocket launcher at the place from which the terrorists attacked. He was marked with a groundsheet as prescribed and the found weapons and combat equipment were confiscated. Because of suspicion that they were also KLA members or that they had informed the KLA about our position, I apprehended three inhabitants of Ramoc and took them along so that the MUP could check them (do a paraffin test, etc.) and determine their possible involvement in the events of the previous night.

27. On the second day, on 28 April 1999, we established contact with the PJP unit in the morning hours and I deferred the three persons from Ramoc and the person we found hiding in the woods to the competence of the commander of the PJP unit. My unit carried on and some time around 1500 hours came to about 200 to 300 meters north of the village of Korenica, thereby reaching the line at which our task ended. From there we returned to the deployment area toward the border with Albania. I would add that on that second day we did not engage in any combat actions, but combat actions could be heard from the direction of the Junik – Korenica – Đakovica main road, on the right side of the line of advance of my unit.

28. [REDACTED]

29. [REDACTED]

30. [REDACTED]

31. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

32.

[REDACTED]

33.

[REDACTED]

34. Finally, I claim categorically that none of my superiors ever issued an order to expel civilians, not did I ever issue such an order to my subordinates. I also claim that I never received or issued an order to search houses with the goal of looting, destroying or unlawfully confiscating the property of civilians. On the contrary, members of my unit arrested persons who committed such actions, and personnel from the services platoon then registered the items and goods found and confiscated and handed them over to the competent military judicial organs.

35. On 6 May 1999, during fighting in the area of the Košare border post, I was wounded in the right temple by shrapnel from a mortar shell. After short sick leave, I returned to the unit and on 5 June 1999 I was wounded again in the area of the village of Bandera, receiving an entry and exit wound in the right knee with permanent consequences. I was transferred to the VMA /Military Medical Academy/ in Belgrade, where I spent the next four months undergoing treatment. The consequences of the wounding were such that I remained permanently disabled, unable to work, and this is why I was retired later.

WITNESS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I read this statement of _____ pages and it contains everything I said to the best of my knowledge and recollection. I have given this Statement voluntarily and am aware that it may be used in legal proceedings before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991, and that I may be called to give evidence in public before the Tribunal.

Signature: _____

Date: _____
